

**Washington, D.C.** - Today, U.S. Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL—08) voted to make college more affordable and accessible by cutting the interest rate on subsidized student loans for undergraduates in half over the next five years – cutting the interest rate from 6.8% to 3.4%. The bill cuts the interest rate in half in five steps: from 6.8% to 6.12% in 2007; 5.44% in 2008; 4.76% in 2009; 4.08% in 2010; and 3.4% in 2011. The House passed the H.R. 5, the College Student Relief Act, this afternoon.

**“In Illinois, 128,765 four-year college students would benefit from this bill,” Bean said. “Once fully phased in, the bill would save the average four-year college student in Illinois starting school in 2011 with qualified student loans \$4,510 over the life of their loans.”**

Tuition and fees at four-year public colleges and universities have risen 41 percent, after inflation, since 2001 – putting college out-of-reach for more and more students. Interest rates on student loans have also risen – increasing the cost of college even more. According to a recent study, if Congress does nothing, financial barriers will prevent 4.4 million high school graduates from attending a four-year public college over the next decade, and prevent another two million high school graduates from attending any college at all.

**“The strength of the American economy depends on a highly-skilled and well-educated workforce,” Bean continued. “Making college more affordable is essential to ensuring that future generations of Americans can compete in an increasingly challenging global economy. I will continue to support efforts to address rising college costs while maintaining an effective, economical student loan system.”**

The bill is fully paid for by making modest reductions in funding for certain lender and guaranty agencies in order to make the student loan program more efficient and effective for students and for American taxpayers.

H.R. 5 is supported by dozens of organizations, including the American Council on Education, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, American Association for State Colleges and Universities, American Association of Community Colleges, Alliance for Equity in Higher Education, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, College Board, College Parents of America, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy.

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